

**September 9, 2020**

## **St. Louis County COVID-19 Update**

### **Elementary School Recommendations**

As discussed by Dr. Page this morning, the Department of Public Health closely tracks new cases of COVID-19 among children and teens and recent data has indicated a steady increase in cases among those 15 to 19 years old. Ninety percent of the cases that have been impacting our schools in the last two weeks, have been in middle or high school. In fact, the rate of new cases in this age group is nearly five times the average rate of new cases among younger children. Additionally, the positivity rate of adolescents who fall in the 15 to 19 year old range, is highest of all age groups at 20%. By contrast, the positivity rate among children aged 5 to 9 is currently at 6%.

Based on our current data, the Department of Public Health is modifying the recommendation for schools that may allow for the consideration of transitioning their elementary school students to in-person education if they determine that is the right decision for them. St. Louis County is not mandating this transition, nor will it set criteria for how this should happen. DPH is simply highlighting the data that currently supports the option for more in-person learning for our youngest students.

The Department of Public Health is aware of all the work that school districts have put in to provide virtual education for their students and understand the difficulties that were accompanied in the process. At this time, DPH urges parents and families to be patient as individual school districts evaluate next steps. There are significant factors that school district leaders will need to consider and plan for, which will dictate if or when elementary students return to in-person education.

DPH has full faith in the superintendents, school leaders, and teachers as they make plans that work best for their students, families, and staff. Even though many may be excited to have students back in classrooms, administrators also understand the disruption and stress that is created if they have to switch back and forth between virtual and in-person education. St. Louis County will remain available to help our school partners.

As a result of our current data, DPH is also not recommending a transition to in-person learning for middle or high school students. As virtual learning continues for these students, DPH will work with our partners to protect and support these students and plan for their eventual transition back to school, as soon as the data supports that decision. It is a unified goal to get to that point safely.

## **Youth Sports Guidelines**

Additionally, the data collected currently supports allowing increased [participation](#) for some youth sports activities. The Youth Sports Guidelines for St. Louis County have been amended and a third classification of sports, moderate-frequency of contact, has been added. These amendments are in alignment with some of the recommendations from the St. Louis Sports Medicine COVID-19 Task Force, as well as the most recent recommendations from the State of Illinois. For the new youth sports guidelines, please click [here](#).

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